

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3845

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 4871

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E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, RP

SUBJ: POSSIBLE US ACTION ON GOMEZ CASE

1. FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE OF GOMEZ CASE CONTINUED APRIL 7 WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS GIVEN TO (A) EMBASSY STATEMENT VICE CONSUL NESS WOULD BE MOVED TO OTHER DUTIES, AND (B) ALLEGED EMBASSY STATEMENT THAT NESS WOULD REMAIN UNTIL JUNE, HIS NORMAL TRANSFER DATE. (PRESS ATTACHE SIMPLY SAID IN REPLY TO PRESS QUERY THAT NESS' NORMAL TOUR OF DUTY IS UP IN JUNE.) TIMES JOURNAL NEWSTORY QUOTED DFA SOURCE AS SAYING WITHDRAWAL OF EXEQUATUR LESSER STEP THAN DECLARING PERSON AS PERSONA NON GRATA BECAUSE UNDER LATTER STEP THE AFFECTED PERSON WOULD HAVE HAD TO LEAVE "IMMEDIATELY."

2. TIMES JOURNAL EDITORIAL SAID INCIDENT CAN NOW BE REGARDED AS "CLOSED." EDITORIAL, HOWEVER, WENT ON TO ASSERT THAT GOMEZ CASE NOT ISOLATED, THAT IT HAD ENCOURAGED MANY OTHERS TO COME FORWARD WITH SIMILAR COMPLAINTS, AND DFA HAD SHOWN IT WOULD "UPHOLD NATIONAL HONOR AND DIGNITY." EDITORIAL CONCLUDED "WE DON'T WANT TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH AMERICANS WHOSE BEHAVIOR, IF ALLOWED TO GO UNCHECKED, COULD ONLY SOUR UP RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE UNITED STATES."

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3. MISS GOMEZ ADVISED EMBASSY SOURCE APRIL 7 SHE EXPECTED TO TESTIFY BEFORE DFA FOR NEXT TWO DAYS AGAINST "ARROGANT AND DISCOURTEOUS TREATMENT OF FELLOW COUNTRYMEN" BY THREE FSLs INVOLVED IN NESS INCIDENT. SHE WANTS DFA OFFICIALLY TO "REPRIMAND" THEM.

4. COMMENT: CASE BROUGHT BY MISS GOMEZ AGAINST EMBASSY AND SPECIFICALLY VICE CONSULS NESS AND RUSSEL HAS HAD FAIRLY BROAD IMPACT ON U.S. IMAGE IN THE PHILIPPINES. IT HAS EXPOSED U.S. EMBASSY TO CONSTANT FRONT-PAGE CRITICISM FOR SEVERAL WEEKS, TO WHICH DFA HAS CONTRIBUTED. MEDIA COVERAGE HAS SPECIFICALLY ENCOURAGED OTHERS TO COME FORWARD AND CRITICIZE EMBASSY AND EFFECTS HAVE BECOME NOTICEABLE IN VISA OPERATIONS OVER PAST WEEKS. ALTHOUGH DFA APPEARS TO HAVE INTENDED WITHDRAWAL OF EXEQUATUR AS SOMEWHAT LESS THAN ULTIMATE PUNISHMENT, EFFECT OF DECISION MAY NOT BE TO END CONTROVERSY BUT TO FEED IT. SUBIC PX LADIES HAVE DRAWN ENCOURAGEMENT FROM MISS GOMEZ CASE TO PRESS THEIR OWN CHARGES IN SUBIC (SEPTTEL) AND MISS GOMEZ APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN SO ENCOURAGED BY DFA ACTION SHE HAS DECIDED TO EXTEND "REVENGE" TO FSLs. IN OUR VIEW, SUM IMPACT OF GOMEZ CASE AND POTENTIAL AFTER EFFECTS MAY WARRANT CONSIDERED HIGH-LEVEL DEMARCHE TO DFA SECRETARY ROMULO WHILE HE IS IN WASHINGTON OR AT LEAST TO AMBASSADOR ROMUALDEZ DURING SAME TIME PERIOD. STULL

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